

will. Rowley. 1649. m. 21. r. 2. A

PLATFORM

Of the Election of members & trial of such as are

CHURCH DISCIPLINE:

independēt

Gathered out of the WORD of GOD,

and agreed upon by the ELDERS and Messengers

of the CHURCHES assembled in the

Synod at CAMBRIDGE in *the Synod 51 matters. An*

NEW ENGLAND: *Ratherford p. 77. p. 78. Let. m*

To be presented to the Churches and General Court for their
consideration and acceptance in the Lord.

The eighth Moneth, Anno 1649.

How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts: Psal. 84. 1.

*Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where
thyne honour dwelleth. Psal. 26. 8.*

*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I
may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to be-
hold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple. Psal.
27. 4.*

L O N D O N,

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of the Castle in Fleetstreet. 1652.

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The PREFACE.

THe setting forth of the Publick Confession of the Faith of Churches hath a double end, and both tending to publick edification: first, the maintenance of the Faith intire within it self: Secondly, the holding forth of Unity and Harmony, both amongst, ^{our selves} and with other Churches.

Our Churches here, as (by the grace of Christ) we believe and profess the same Doctrine of the truth of the Gospel, which generally is received in all the Reformed Churches of Christ in Europe: so especially, we desire not to vary from the doctrine of Faith, and truth held forth by the Churches of our native countrey. For though it be not one native countrey that can breed us all of one minde; nor ought we for to have the glorious faith of our Lord Iesus with respect of persons: yet as Paul who was himself a Jew, professed to hold forth the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and of the Resurrection of the Dead, according as he knew his godly Countrey men did, who were Jews by nature, Gal. 2.15. Acts. 26.6,7. so we, who are by nature Englishmen, do desire to hold forth the same doctrine of Religion (especially in Fundamentals) which we see and know to be held by the Churches of England, according to the truth of the Gospel.

The more we discern, (that which we do, and have cause to do with incessant mourning and trembling) the unkinde, and unbrotherly, and unchristian Contentions of our godly Brethren and Countrey men in matters of Church-government: the more earnestly do we desire to see them joyned together in one common faith, and our selves with them. For this end, having perused the Publick Confession of Faith, agreed upon by the reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and finding the sum and substance thereof (in matters of Doctrine) to express not their own judgments onely, but ours also: and being likewise called upon by our godly Magistrates, to draw up a publick Confession of that Faith which is constantly taught, and generally professed amongst us, we thought good to present unto them, and with them to our Churches, and with them to all the Churches of Christ abroad, our professed and hearty assent and attestation to the whole Confession of Faith [for substance of Doctrine] which the reverend Assembly presented to the religious and honourable Parliament of England: excepting onely some Sections in the 25. 30. and 31. Chapters of their

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Confession, which concern points of controversie in Church-discipline: touching which we refer our selves to the draught of Church discipline in the ensuing Treatise.

Synod at Cambridge 1648. The truth of what we here declare may appear by the unanimous vote of the Synod of the Elders and Messengers of our Churches assembled at Cambridge, the last of the sixth moneth, 1648. which joyntly passed in these words; This Synod having perused, and considered (with much gladness of heart, and thankfulness to God) the Confession of Faith published of late by the reverend Assembly in England, do judg it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of Faith; and do therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Onely in those things which have respect to Church-government and discipline, we refer our selves to the platform of Church-discipline, agreed upon by this present Assembly: and do therefore think it meet, that this Confession of Faith should be commended to the Churches of Christ amongst us, and to the honoured Court, as worthy of their due consideration and acceptance. Howbeit, we may not conceal, that the doctrine of vocation expressed in Chap. 10. S. 1. and summarily repeated, Chap. 13. & 1. passed not without some debate. Yet considering, that the term of vocation, and others by which it is described, are capable of a large, or more strict sense and use, and that it is not intended to binde apprehensions precisely in point of order and method, there hath been a general condescendency thereunto.

Now this our professed consent and free concurrence with them in all the Doctrinals of Religion, we hope, it may appear to the world, that as we are a remnant of the people of the same nation with them: so we are professors of the same common faith, and fellow-heirs of the same common salvation. Yea moreover, as this our profession of the same faith with them, will exempt us [even in their judgments] from suspicion of Heresie; so [we trust] it may exempt us in the like sort from suspicion of Schism; that though we are forced to dissent from them in matters of Church-discipline; yet our dissent is not taken up out of arrogancy of spirit in our selves [whom they see willingly condescend to learn of them:] neither is it carried with uncharitable censoriousness towards them [both which are the proper and essential characters of Schism] but in meekness of wisdom, as we walk along with them, and follow them, as they follow Christ: so where we conceive a different apprehension of the minde of Christ [as it falleth out in some few points touching Church-order] we still reserve due reverence to them [whom we judg to be, through Christ, the glorious lights of both nations:] and onely crave leave [as in spirit we are bound] to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and [after the Apostles example] as we believe, so we speak.

And

And if the example of such poor out-casts as our selves, might prevail if ^Snot with all [for that were too great a blessing to hope for] yet with some or other of our brethren in England, so far as they are come to minde & speak the same thing with such as dissent from them, we hope in Christ, it would not onely moderate the harsh judging and condemning of one another in such differences of judgment as may be found in the choicest Saints; but also prevent [by the mercy of Christ] the peril of the destruction and destruction of all the Churches in both Kingdoms. Otherwise if brethren shall go on to bite and devour one another, the Apostle feared [as we also, with sadness of heart do] it will tend to the consuming of them, and us all: which the Lord prevent.

We are not ignorant, that [besides these aspersions of Hereſie and Schism] other exceptions also are taken at our way of Church-government: but [as we conceive] upon as little ground.

As 1. That by admitting none to the fellowship of our Church but Saints by calling, we rob many Parish-churches of their best members, to make up one of our Congregations: which is not onely, to gather Churches out of Churches (a thing unheard of in Scripture:) but also to weaken the hearts and hands of the best Ministers in the Parishes, by dispoiling them of their best hearers.

2. That we provide no course for the gaining, and calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our Churches, and so exclude from the wholsom remedy of Church-discipline.

3. That in our way, we sow seeds of division and hindrance of edification in every family: whilest admitting into our Churches onely voluntaries, the Husband will be of one Church, the Wife of another; the Parents of one Church, the Children of another; the Master of one Church, the Servants of another: and so the Parents and Masters being of different Churches from their Children and Servants, they cannot take a just account of their profiting by what they hear; yea, by this means the Husbands, Parents, and Masters shall be chargeable to the maintenance of many other Churches and Church-officers, besides their own, which will prove a charge and burden unportable. But for answer, as to the first.

For gathering Churches out of Churches, we cannot say that it is a thing unheard of in Scripture. The first Christian Church was gathered out of the Jewish Church, and out of many Synagogues in that Church, and consisted partly of the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, partly of the Galileans: who though they kept some communion in some parts of publick worship with the Temple: yet neither did they frequent the Sacrifices, nor repair to the Sanhedrim for the determining of

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their church-cases, but kept intire and constant communion with the Apostles Church in all the Ordinances of the Gospell. And for the first Christian Church of the Gentiles at Antioch, it appeareth to have been gathered and constituted partly of the dispersed Brethren of the Church at Jerusalem (whereof some were men of Cyprus, and Cyren) and partly of the believing Gentiles. Acts. 11. 20, 21.

If it be said the first Christian Church at Jerusalem, and that at Antioch were gathered not out of any christian church, but out of the Jewish Temple and Synagogues, which were shortly after to be abolished: and their gathering to Antioch, was upon occasion of dispersion in time of persecution.

We desire, it may be considered, 1. That the Members of the Jewish Church were more strongly and straitly tyed by express holy Covenant, to keep fellowship with the Jewish Church, till it was abolished, than any Members of Christian Parish-Churches are wont to be tyed to keep fellowship with their Parish-churches. The Episcopal Canons, which binde them to attend on their Parish-Church, it is likely they are now abolished with the Episcopacy. The common Law of the Land is satisfied (as we conceive) if they attend upon the worship of God in any other Church though not within their own Parish. But no such like Covenant of God, nor any other religious tie lyeth upon them to attend the worship of God in their Temple and Synagogues.

2. Though the Jewish Temple Church at Jerusalem was to be abolished, yet that doth not make the desertion of it by the Members, to be lawfull, till it was abolished. Future abolition is no warrant for present desertion: unless it be lawfull in some case whilst the Church is yet in present standing to desert it; to wit, either for avoiding of present pollutions, or for hope of greater edification, and so for better satisfaction to conscience in either future events (or foresight of them) do not dissolve present relation. Else Wives, Children, Servants, might desert their Husbands, Parents, Masters, when they be mortally sick.

3. What the Members of the Jewish Church did, in joyning to the Church at Antioch, in time of persecution, it may well be conceived, the Members of any Christian Church may do the like, for satisfaction of Conscience. Peace of Conscience is more desirable, than the peace of the outward man: and freedom from scruples of conscience is more comfortable to a sincere heart, than freedom from persecution.

If it be said, these Members of the Christian Church at Jerusalem, that joyined to the Church at Antioch, removed their habitations together with their relations: which if the Brethren of the congregational way would do, it would much abate their grievance of their departure from their presbyterial Churches.

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We verily could wish them so to do, as well approving the like removal of habitations, a case of changing Church-relations (provided, that it may be done without too much detriment to their outward estate) and we for our parts, have done the same. But to put a necessity of removal of habitation in such a case, it is to foment and cherish a corrupt principle of making civil cohabitation, if not a formal cause, yet at least a proper adjunct of Church-relation; which the truth of the Gospel doth not acknowledg. Now to foment an error to the prejudice of the truth of the Gospel, is not to walk with a right foot according to the truth of the Gospel, as Paul judgeth, Gal. 2. 14.

4. We do not think it meet, or safe, for a Member of a presbyterial Church, forthwith to desert his relation to his Church, betake himself to the fellowship of a Congregational Church, though he may discern some defect in the estate, or government of his own.

For 1. Faithfulness of brotherly love in Church-relation, requireth, that the Members of the Church should first convince their brethren of their sinfull defects, and duly wait for their reformation, before they depart from them. For if we must take such a course for the healing of a private Brother, in a way of brotherly love, with much meekness and patience: how much more ought we to walk with like tenderness towards a whole Church.

Again 2. By the hasty departure of sound Members from a defective Church, reformation is not promoted, but many times retarded, and corruption increased. Whereas on the contrary, while sincere Members breathe after purity of reformation abide together, they may (by the blessing of God upon their faithfull endeavours) prevail much with their Elders, and Neighbours towards a reformation; it may be, so much, as that their Elders in their own Church shall receive none to the Seals, but visible Saints: and in the Classis shall put forth no authoritative Act (but consultative onely) touching the Members of other churches: not touching their own but with the consent (silent consent at least) of their own church: which two things, if they can obtain with any humble, meek, holy, faithfull endeavours, we conceive, they might (by the grace of Christ finde liberty of conscience to continue their relation with their own presbyterial Church, without scruple.

5. But to add a word farther, touching the gathering of Churches out of Gathering Churches, what if there were no expresse example of such a thing extant in the Scriptures? that which we are wont to answer the Antipaedobaptists, may suffice here: it is enough, if any evidence thereof may be gathered from a just consequence of Scripture-light, Doctor Ames his judgment concerning this case, ^{the words table 5th} passeth [for ought we know] without exception, which he gave in his fourth Book ^{D. Ames of Consc. B. 4. ch. 24. n. 1.} of Conscience in Answer to two Quest. c. 24. num. 16. & 15. p. 63. 1655

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If any (saith he) wronged with unjust vexation, or providing for his own edification, or in testimony against sin depart from a Church where some evils are tolerated, and joyn himself to another more pure, yet without condemning of the Church he leaveth, he is not therefore to be held as a

& departing
from a
Church

which the judicious Doctour putteth, declareth the lawfulness of the departure of a Church member from a Church, when either through weariness of unjust vexation, or in way of provision for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, he joyneth himself to another congregation more reformed. Any one of these he judgeth a just and lawfull cause of departure, though all them do not concur together. Neither will such a practise despoil the best Ministers of the Parishes of their best Hearers.

For 1. Sometimes the Ministers themselves are willing to joyn with their better sort of hearers, in this way of Reformation: and then they and their hearers continue still their Church-relation together, yea and confirm it more stoutly and strongly, by an expresse renewed covenant, though the Ministers may still continue their wonted preaching to their whole Parish.

rightly

2. If the Ministers do dislike the way of those, whom they otherwise count their best members, and so refuse to joyn with them therein; yet if those members can procure some other Ministers to joyn with them in their own way, and still continue their dwelling together in the same Town, they may easily order the times of the publick assembly, as to attend constantly upon the ministry of their former Church, and either after or before their publick assembly of the Parish take an opportunity to gather together for the administration of Sacraments, & Censures, and other Church-ordinances amongst themselves. The first Apostolick Church assembled to hear the Word with the Jewish Church in the open Courts of the Temple; but afterwards gathered together for breaking of Bread, and other acts of Church-order, from house to house.

Acts. 2.42

11. 41 & 42 & 20 & 7

3. Suppose, Presbyterial Churches should communicate some of their best gifted members toward the erecting and gathering of another Church: it would not forthwith be their detriment, but may be their enlargement. It is the most noble and perfect work of a living creature (both in nature and grace) to propagate and multiply his kinde: and it is the honour of the faithfull Spouse of Christ, to set forward the work of Christ, as well abroad as at home. The Church in *Cam.* 8.8. to help forward her little sister-church, was willing to part with her choice-materials, even beams of Cedar, and such precious living stones, as were fit to build a Silver-palace. In the same Book, the

Cam. 8.8.

the church is compared sometime to a Garden, sometime to an Orchard, *Cant. 4. 12, 13.* No man planteth a Garden or Orchard, but seeketh to get the choylest herbs, and plants of his Neighbours, and they freely impart them: nor do they account it a spoil to their Gardens and Orchards, but rather a glory. Nevertheless we go not so far: we neither seek nor ask the choyce members of the Parishes, but accept them being offered.

If it be said, they are not offered by the Ministers, nor by the Parish-churches (who have most right in them) but onely by themselves.

It may justly be demanded what right, or what power have either the ministers, or Parish-church over them? Not by solemn church-covenant: for that, though it be the firmeest engagement, is not owned, but rejected. If it be, by their joyning with the Parish, in the calling and election of a Minister to such a Congregation at his first coming, there is indeed just weight in such an Engagement: nor do we judg it safe for such to remove from such a Minister, unless it be upon such grounds, as may justly give him due satisfaction. But if the union of such Members to a Parish-church, and to the Ministry thereof, be onely by cohabitation within the precincts of the Parish, that union, as it was found upon humane Law: so by humane Law it may easily be released. Or otherwise, if a man remove his habitation, he removeth also the bond of his relation, and the ground of offence.

4. It need not be feared, that all best hearers of the best Ministers, no nor the most of them, will depart from them upon point of Church-government. Those who have found the presence and power of the spirit of Christ breathing in their Ministers, either to their conversion, or edification, will be slow to change such a Ministry of faith, and holiness, for the liberty of Church-order. Upon which ground, and sundry other such like, there be doubtless sundry godly and judicious hearers in many Parishes in *England* that do and will prefer their relation to their Ministers (though in a presbyterial way) above the congregational confederation.

5. But if all, or the most part of the best hearers of the best Ministers of Parishes, should depart from them, as preferring in their judgments, the congregational way: yet, in case the congregational way should prove to be of Christ, it will never grieve the holy hearts of godly Ministers, that their hearers should follow after Christ: yea many of themselves (upon due deliberation) will be ready to go along with them. It never grieved nor troubled *John Baptist* that his best Disciples, departed from him to follow after Christ. *John 3. 31* But in case the congregational way should prove to be, not the institution of Christ (as we take it) but the invention of men: then doubtless,

*John 13
37 to 42*

Exo. 7. 10.
11. 12.

Eph.
15.

the presbyterial form (if it be of God) will swallow up the other, as *Moses* Rod devoured the Rods of the *Egyptians*. Nor will this put a necessity upon both the opposite parties, to shif for themselves, and to seek to supplant one another: but onely, it will call upon them *αὐθιγὸν ἐργάζεσθαι*, to seek and to follow the truth in love, to attend in faithfulness each unto his own flock, and to administer to them all the holy things of God, and their portion of food in due season: and as for others, quietly to forbear them, and yet to instruct them with meekness that are contrary minded: leaving it to Christ (in the use of all good means) to reveal his own truth in his own time: and mean while endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. *Phil. 3. 15, 16. Ephes. 4. 3.*

To the 2. Exception, That we take no course for the gaining and healing, &c. calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude them from the remedy of church-discipline.

We conceive the receiving of them into our Churches, would rather lose and corrupt our Churches, than gain and heal them. A little Leaven layed in a lump of dough, will sooner leaven the whole lump, than the whole lump will sweeten it. We therefore finde it safer, to square rough and unbewen stones, before they be laid into the building, rather than to hammer and hew them, when they lie unevenly in the building.

And accordingly, two means (we use) to gain and call in such as are ignorant or scandalous. 1. The publique Ministry of the Word, upon which they are invited by counsel, and required by wholesome Laws to attain. And the word it is which is the power of God to salvation, to the calling and winning of souls. 2. Private conference, and conviction by the Elders, and other able Brethren of the Church, whom they do the more respectively hearken unto, when they see no hope of enjoying Church-fellowship, or participation in the Sacraments for themselves, or their Children, till they approve their judgments to be sound and orthodox, and their lives subdued to some hope of a godly conversation. What can classical discipline, or excommunication it self do more in this case.

The 3. Exception wrappeth up in it a threefold domestical inconvenience: and each of them meet to be eschewed. 1. Disunion in Families between each relation. 2. Disappointment of edification, for want of opportunity in the governours of Families, to take account of things heard by their Children and Servants. 3. Disbursements of chargeable maintenance to the severall churches, whereto the severall persons of their Families are joyned.

All which inconveniences either do not fall out in congregational-churches; or are easily redressed. For none are ~~ordainly~~ admitted into congregational churches, but such as are well approved by good testimony, to be duly observant of family-relations. Or if any otherwise disposed should creep in, they are either orderly healed, or duly removed in a way of Christ. Nor are they admitted, unless they can give some good account of their profiting by Ordinances, before the Elders and Brethren of the Church: and much more to their Parents and Masters. Godly Tutors in the University can take an account of their Pupills: and godly householders in the City can take account of their Children and Servants, how they profit by the word they have heard in several Churches: and that to the greater edification of the whole Family, by the variety of such administrations. Bees may bring the more Honey and Wax into the Hive, when they are not limited to one Garden of flowers, but may fly abroad to many.

Nor is any charge expected from Wives, Children, or Servants to the maintenance of congregational Churches, further than they be furnished with personal estates, or earnings, which may enable them to contribute of such things as they have, and not of such as they have not. God accepteth not Robbery for a sacrifice. And though a godly Householder may justly take himself bound in conscience, to contribute to any such Church, whereto his Wife, or Children, or Servants do stand in relation: yet that will not aggravate the burden of his charge, no more than if they were received members of the same Church whereto himself is related.

But why do we stand thus long to plead exemptions from exceptions? the Lord help all his faithfull Servants (whether presbyterial or congregational) to judge and shame ourselves before the Lord for all our former compliances to greater enormities in Church-Government, than are to be found either in the congregational, or presbyterial way. And then surely, either the Lord will clear up his own will to us, and so frame, and subdue us all to one minde, and one way, (Ezek. 43. 10, 11.) or else we shall learn to bear one anothers burdens in a spirit of meekness. It will then doubtless be far from us, so to attest the discipline of Christ, as to detest the Disciples of Christ: so to contend for the seamless coat of Christ, as to crucifie the living members of Christ: so to divide our selves about Church-communion, as through breaches to open a wide gap for a deluge of Antichristian and prophane malignity to swallow up both Church and civil state.

What shall we say more? is difference about Church-order become the inlet of all the disorders in the Kingdom? hath the Lord indeed left us to such hardness of heart, that Church-Government shall become a snare to Zion, (as sometimes Moses was to Egypt. Exod. 10. 7.) that we cannot leave contesting and con-

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ending about it, till the Kingdom be destroyed? did not the Lord Jesus, when
he dedicated his sufferings for his church, and his also unto his Father, make it
his earnest and only prayer for us in this world, that we all might be one in him?
John 17. 20, 21, 22, 23. And it is possible, that he (whom the Father heard
always, John 11. 42.) should not have this last most solemn prayer heard, and
granted? or, shall it be granted for all the Saints elsewhere, and not for the
Saints in England; so that amongst them disunion shall grow even about Church-
union, and Communion? If it be possible, for a little faith (so much as a grain
of Mustard-seed) to remove a Mountain: is it not possible, for so much strength
of faith, as is to be found in all the godly in the Kingdom, to remove those Images
of jealousy, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder
the free passage of brotherly love amongst Brethren? It is true indeed, the Na-
tional covenant doth justly engage both parties, faithfully to endeavour the utter
extirpation of the Antichristian Hierarchy, and much more of all blasphemies,
Heresies, and damnable errors. Certainly, if congregational discipline be in-
dependent from the inventions of men, is it not much more Independent from the
delusions of Satan? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? light with dark-
ness? truth with error? The faithful Jews needed not the help of the Sama-
ritans, to re-edifie the Temple of God: yea, they rejected their help when it was
offered, Ezra 4. 1, 2, 3. And if the congregational way be a way of truth (as
we believe) and if the Brethren that walk in it be zealous of the truth, and hate
every false way (as by the rule of their holy discipline they are instructed, 2-John
10, 11.) then verily, there is no branch in the National Covenant, that en-
gageth the covenanters to abhor either congregational churches, or their way:
which being duly administred, do no less effectually extirpate the Antichristian
Hierarchy, and all blasphemies, Heresies, and pernicious errors, than other
way of discipline doth, which is more generally and publickly received and rati-
fied.

But the Lord Jesus commune with all our hearts in secret: and he who is the
King of his Church, let him be pleased to exercise his Kingly power in our spi-
rits, that so his Kingdom may come into our churches in purity and peace. A-
men, Amen.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Form of Church-Government; and that it is one, immutable and prescribed in the Word of God.

I.

Church Govern^t



Ecclesiastical Policy or Church Government, or Discipline is nothing else, but that Form and Order that is to be observed in the Church of Christ upon earth, both for the Constitution of it, and all the Administrations that therein are to be performed.

*Ezek. 43. 11.
Col. 2. 5.
1 Tim. 3. 15.*

2. Church-Government is considered in a double respect, either in regard of the parts of Government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of Government are prescribed in the word, because the Lord Jesus Christ the King and Law-giver of his Church, is no less faithfull in the house of God than was *Moses*, who from the Lord delivered a *form* and pattern of Government to the Children of Israel in the old Testament. And the holy Scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and therefore doubtless to the well ordering of the house of God.

*Heb. 3. 5, 6.
Exod. 25. 40.
2 Tim. 3. 16.*

3. The parts of Church-Government are all of them exactly described in the word of God being parts or means of instituted worship according to the second Commandement: and therefore to continue one and the same, unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, untill he shall deliver it up unto God, even the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, Churches, or any state in the world to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.

*1 Tim. 3. 15.
1 Chron. 15.
13: Exo. 20.
4. 1 Tim. 6. 13
u. 16. Hebr.
12. 27. 28.
1 Cor. 15. 24.
Deut. 12. 32.
Ezek. 43. 8.
1 Kings 12.
31. 32, 33.*

4. The necessary circumstances, as time & place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men as that under pretence

*1 Kings 12.
v. 1. 28, 29.*

ending about it, till the Kingdom be destroyed? did not the Lord Jesus, when he dedicated his suffering for his church, and his also unto his Father, make it his earnest and only prayer for us in this world, that we all might be one in him? John 17. 20, 21, 22, 23. And it is possible, that he (whom the Father heard always, John 1. 42.) should not have this last most solemn prayer heard, and granted? or, shall it be granted for all the Saints elsewhere, and not for the Saints in England; so that amongst them disunion shall grow even about Church-union, and Communion? If it be possible, for a little faith (so much as a grain of Mustard-seed) to remove a Mountain: is it not possible, for so much strength of faith, as is to be found in all the godly in the Kingdom, to remove those Images of jealousy, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love amongst Brethren? It is true indeed, the National covenant doth justly engage both parties, faithfully to endeavour the utter extirpation of the Antichristian Hierarchy, and much more of all blasphemies, Heresies, and damnable errors. Certainly, if congregational discipline be independent from the inventions of men, is it not much more Independent from the delusions of Satan? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? light with darkness? truth with error? The faithful Jews needed not the help of the Samaritans, to re-edifie the Temple of God: yea, they rejected their help when it was offered, Ezra. 4. 1, 2, 3. And if the congregational way be a way of truth (as we believe) and if the Brethren that walk in it be zealous of the truth, and hate every false way (as by the rule of their holy discipline they are instructed, 2 John 10, 11.) then verily, there is no branch in the National Covenant, that engageth the covenanters to abhor either congregational churches, or their way: which being duly administred, do no less effectually extirpate the Antichristian Hierarchy, and all blasphemies, Heresies, and pernicious errors, than other way of discipline doth, which is more generally and publickly received and ratified.

But the Lord Jesus commune with all our hearts in secret: and he who is the King of his Church, let him be pleased to exercise his Kingly power in our spirits, that so his Kingdom may come into our churches in purity and peace Amen, Amen.

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Of the Form of Church-Government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the Word of God.

I.



Ecclesiastical Policy or Church Government, or Discipline is nothing else, but that Form and Order that is to be observed in the Church of Christ upon earth, both for the Constitution of it, and all the Administrations that therein are to be performed.

2. Church-Government is considered in a double respect either in regard of the parts of Government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of Government are prescribed in the word, because the Lord Jesus Christ the King and Law-giver of his Church, is no less faithfull in the house of God than was Moses, who from the Lord delivered a *form* and patern of Government to the Children of Israel in the old Testament: And the holy Scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and therefore doubtless to the well ordering of the house of God.

3. The parts of Church-Government are all of them exactly described in the word of God being parts or means of instituted worship according to the second Commandement: and therefore to continue one and the same, unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, untill he shall deliver it up unto God, even the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, Churches, or any state in the world to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.

4. The necessary circumstances, as time & place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men as that under pretence

Church Govern^t.

Ezek. 43. 11.

Col. 2. 5.

1 Tim. 3. 15.

Heb. 3. 5, 6.

Exod. 25. 40.

2 Tim. 3. 16.

1 Tim. 3. 15.

1 Chron. 15.

13. Exo. 20.

4. 1 Tim. 6. 13

u. 16. Hebr.

12. 27. 28.

1 Cor. 15. 24.

Deut. 32. 32.

Ezek. 43. 8.

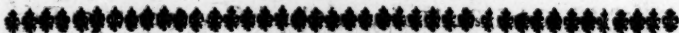
1 Kings 12.

34. 33. 33.

1 Kings 12.

u. 1. 28. 29.

Isay 9.13. of them, they may thrust their own Inventions upon the Churches :
Col. 2.22,23. Being Circumscribed in the word with many General limitations ;
Acts 15.28. where they are determined in respect of the matter to be neither wor-
Matt. 15.9. ship it self, nor Circumstances separable from worship : in respect of
1 Cor. 11.23. their end, they must be done unto edification : in respect of the man-
c. 8.34. ner, decently, and in order, according to the nature of the things
1 Cor. 14.26. themselves, and Civil, and Church custom, doth not even nature it
1 Cor. 14.40. selfe teach you? yea, they are in some sort determined particularly,
1 Cor. 11.14. namely that they be done in such a manner, as all circumstances con-
1 Cor. 11.16. sidered, is most expedient for edification : so, as if there be no er-
1 Cor. 14.12, rour of man concerning their determination, the determining of them
19. Acts 15. is to be accounted as if it were divine.
28.



C H A P. II.

*Of the nature of the Catholick Church in General, and in special,
of a particular visible Church.*

Eph. 1.22,23 **T**HE Catholick Church, is the whole company of those that are
Col. 5.25,26, elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the
30. Heb. 12. state of sin and death unto a state of Grace, and salvation in Jesus
23. Christ.

Rom. 8. 17. 2. This church is either Triumphant, or Militant ; Triumphant,
2 Tim. 2.12. the number of them who are glorified in Heaven : Militant, the
c. 4.8. Eph. 6. number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.
12, 13. 3. This Militant Church is to be considered as Invisible, and Vi-
2 Tim. 2.19. sible ; Invisible, in respect of their relation wherein they stand to
Rev. 21.7. Christ, as a body unto the head, being united unto him, by the spirit
1 Cor. 6.17. of God, and faith in their hearts : Visible, in respect of the profession
Eph. 3.17. of their faith, in their persons, and in particular Churches : and so
Rom. 1.8. there may be acknowledged an universal visible Church.
1 The. 1.8. 4. The members of the Militant visible Church, considered either
Isay. 2.2. as not yet in church-order, or as walking according to the church-
1 Tim. 6.12. order of the Gospel : In order, and so besides the spiritual union,
Acts 19.1 and communion, common to all believers, they enjoy moreover
Col. 2.5. an union and communion Ecclesiastical-Political : so we deny an
Matt. 18.17. universal visible church.
1 Cor. 5.12. 5. The state of the members of the Militant visible church walking
 in order, was either before the law, Oeconomical, that is in families ;

or under the law, National : or, since the coming of Christ, onely congregational. (The term Independent, we approve not :) Therefore neither national, provincial, nor claffical.

6. A Congregational-church, is by the institution of Christ a part of the Militant-visible-church, confifting of a company of Saints by calling, united into one body, by a holy covenant, for the publick worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the Fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

Independēt
Gen. 18. 19.
Exod. 19. 6.
1 Cor. 14. 23.
1 Cor. 14. 36.
1 Cor. 1. 2.
1 Cor. 12. 27.
Exo. 19. 5, 6.
Deut. 29. 1,
& 9, 10 15.
Acts 2. 42.
1 Cor. 14. 26.

CHAP. III.

Of the matter of visible Church, both in respect of Quality and Quantity.

THE matter of a visible Church are *Saints* by calling.
2. By Saints, we understand.

1. Such, as have not onely attained the knowledge of the principles of Religion, and are free from grofs and open scandals, but also do together with the profession of their faith and Repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the word, so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted Saints by calling, (though perhaps some or more of them be unsound, and hypocrites inwardly :) because the members of such particular churches are commonly by the Holy Ghost called Saints and faithful brethren in Christ, and sundry churches have been reprov'd for receiving, and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship amongst them as have been offensive and scandalous : the name of God also by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and prophaned, the hearts of godly grieved, and the wicked themselves hardned, and holpen forward to damnation : The example of such doeth endanger the sanctity of others. A little Leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Gal. 5. 9.

1 Cor. 1. 2.
Eph. 1. 1.
Hebr. 6. 1.
1 Cor. 1. 5. *Str.*
Rom. 15. 14.
Psal. 50. 16,
17. *Act.* 8.
37. *Matt.* 3. 6
Rom. 6. 17.
1 Cor. 1. 2.
Phil. 1. 2.
Col. 1. 2.
Eph. 1. 1.
1 Cor. 5. 2, 13
Rev. 21. 15,
& 20. *Exch.*
44. 7, & 9. &
c. 23. 38, &
39. *Nun.* 19
& 20. *Hagg.*
2. 13, 14.
1 Cor 11. 27,
29. *Psal.* 37.
21. *1 Cor.* 5.
6. 1 *Cor.* 7. &
14.
Jer. 2. 21.
1 Cor. 5. 10.
Jer. 1. 4. *Gal.*
5. 4. 2 *Cor.*
12. 21. *Rev.*
as 2 14, 15. &
21. 21.

2. The children of such, who are also holy.
3. The members of churches though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate, and grow corrupt and scandalous, which though they ought not to be tolerated in the church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of discipline and just censures, doth not immediately dissolve the being of the church, as it appears in the church of *Israel*, and the churches of *Galatia*, and *Corinth*, *Pergamum*, and *Thyatira*.

1 Cor. 14. 21.

Matt. 18. 17.

Rom. 16. 1.

1 Thes. 1. 1.

Rev. 2. 8. c. 3.

7.

1 Cor. 16. 1.

19. Gal. 1. 2.

2 Cor. 8. 1.

1 Thes. 2. 14.

Act. 2. 46. c. 5.

12. c. 6. 2.

Acts 14. 17.

c. 15. 38.

1 Cor. 5. 4. c.

14. 23.

Rom. 16. 1.

4. The matter of the Church in respect of it's quantity ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place: nor ordinarily fewer, than may conveniently carry on Church-work. Hence when the holy Scripture maketh mention of the Saints combined into a church estate, in a *Town or City*, where was but one Congregation, it usually calleth those Saints [*the church*] in the singular number, as *the church* of the *Thessalonians* the church of *Smyrna*, *Philadelphia*, and the like: But when it speaketh of the Saints in a *Nation*, or *Province*, wherein there were sundry Congregations. It frequently and usually calleth them by the name of *churches* in the plural number, as the [*churches*] of *Asia*, *Gallatia*, *Macedonia*, and the like: which is further confirmed by what is written of sundry of those churches in particular, how they were Assembled and met together, the whole church in one place, as the church at *Jerusalem*, the church at *Antioch*, the church at *Corinth*, and *Cenchrea*, though it were more neer to *Corinth*, it being the port thereof, and answerable to a *Village*, yet being a distinct Congregation from *Corinth*, it had a church of its own as well as *Corinth* had.

5. Nor can it with reason be thought but that every church appointed and ordained by *Christ*, had a ministrie ordained and appointed for the same: and yet plain it is, that there were no ordinary officers appointed by *Christ* for any other than *Congregational* churches: Elders being appointed to feed, not all flocks, but that particular flock of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock: and one *Congregation*, being as much as any ordinary Elders can attend, therefore there is no greater Church than a *Congregation*, which may ordinarily meet in one place.



CHAP. IV.

Of the Form of a Visible Church, and of Church Covenant.

1 Cor. 12. 27.

1 Tim. 3. 15.

Saints by calling, must have a Visible-Political-Union amongst themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church: as those similitudes hold forth which the Scripture makes use of, to shew the nature of particular Churches: As a *Body*, a *building*, or *House*, *Hands*,

Hands, Eyes, Feet, and other members must be united, or else, remaining separate are not a body. *Stones, Timber*, though squared, hewn and polished, are not an house until they are compacted and united : so *Saints or believers* in judgment of charity, are not a church, unless *Orderly* knit together. Eph. 2. 22.
1 Cor. 12 15,
16, 17.

2. Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another but by their formes : *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, and *Pergamus Thyatira*, Rev. 1. but each one a distinct society of it self, having officers of their own, which had not the charge of others : Virtues of their own, for which others are not praised : Corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed.

3. This *Form* is the *Visible Covenant*, Agreement, or Consent whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the *Church-Covenant* ; For we see not otherwise how members can have *Church-power* one over another mutually. Exo. 19. 5. v.
8. Deut. 29.
12, 13. Zach.
11. 14. c. 9. 11

The comparing of each particular church unto a *City*, and unto a *Sponse*, seemeth to conclude not onely a *Form*, but that that *Form* is by way of *Covenant*. Eph. 2. 19.
2 Cor. 11. 2.

The *Covenant*, as it was that which made the Family of *Abraham* and children of *Israel* to be a church and people unto God, so is it that which now makes the several societies of *Gentil-believers* to be churches in these days. Gen. 17. 7.
Deut. 29. 12,
13. Eph. 2. 12,
19.

4. This Voluntary *Agreement, Consent* or *Covenant* (for all these are here taken for the same :) Although the more expresse and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in minde of our mutual duty, & stirreth us up to it, and leaveth less room for the questioning of the Truth of the *Church-estate* of a Company of professors, and the truth of membership of particular persons : yet we conceive, the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent, of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick worship of God, and their mutual edification : which real agreement and consent they do expresse by their constant practise in coming together for the publick worship of God, and by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God there : the rather, if we do consider how Scripture Covenants have been entred into, not onely expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice ; by hand Exo. 19. 5, 10
8. & 24. 3, 17
Josh. 24. 18,
10. 24. Psal.
50. 5. Neh. 9.
38. c. 10.
1 Gen. 17.
Deut. 29.

writing, and seal; and also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all.

5. This form then being by mutual Covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor Baptisme; 1. Not faith in the heart? because that is invisible: 2. Not a bare profession; because that declareth them no more to be members of one church than of another: 3. Not Cohabitation; *Athiests* or *Infidels* may dwell together with believers: 4. Not Baptisme; because it presupposeth a church estate, as Circumcision in the old Testament, which gave no being unto the church the church being before it, and in the wilderness without it: Seals presuppose a Covenant already in being, one person is a compleat subject of Baptisme: but one person is incapable of being a church.

Aff. 2. 47. &

9. 26. Mat. 3.

13, 14, 15.

& 28. 19, 20.

Psalm. 133. 2.

3. & 87. 7.

Matt. 18. 20.

1 John 1. 3.

Psa. 119. last

1 Pet. 2. 25.

Eph. 4. 16.

John 22. 24.

25. Mat. 18.

15, 16, 17.

6. All believers ought, as God giveth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavour to join themselves unto a particular church and that in respect of the honour of Jesus Christ, in his example, and Institution, by the professed acknowledgment of, and subjection unto the order and ordinances of the Gospel: as also in respect of their good of communion founded upon their visible union, and contained in the promises of Christs special presence in the church: whence they have fellowship with him, and in him one with another: Also for the keeping of them in the way of Gods commandments, and recovering of them in case of wandring, (which all Christs sheep are subject to in this life,) being unable to return of themselves; together with the benefit of their mutual edification, and of their posterity, that they may not be cut off from the priviledges of the covenant: otherwise, if a believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf; and should all believers neglect this duty of joining to all particular congregations: it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible political churches upon earth.



CHAP. V.

Matt. 28. 18.

Rev. 3. 7.

1 say 9. 6.

John 20. 21,

23. 1 Cor. 14.

32. Tit. 1. 5.

1 Cor. 5. 12.

Of the first subject of Church-Power or, to whom Church-Power doth first belong.

THe first subject of church-power, is either *Supream*, or *Subordinate*, and *Ministerial*: the *Supream* (by way of gift from the father)

father) is the Lord Jesus Christ: the *Ministerial*, is either extraordinary; as the *Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists*: or *Ordinary*; as every particular *Congregational church*.

2. *Ordinary church-power*, is either the power of office, that is, such as is proper to the Eldership: or, power of privilege, such as belongs unto the brotherhood: the latter, is in the brethren formally, and immediately from Christ, that is, so as it may according to order be acted or exercised immediately by themselves: the former, is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they design the persons unto office, who onely are to act, or to exercise this power.

Rom. 12. 4, 8.
Acts 1. 23, c.
6. 3, 4. c. 14.
23. 1 Cor. 12.
29, 30.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Officers of the Church, and especially of Pastors and Teachers.

A Church being a company of people combined together by Covenant for the worship of God, it appeareth thereby, that there may be the essence, and being of a church without any officers, seeing there is both the form and matter of a church, which is implied, when it is said, the *Apostles* ordained Elders in every church.

Acts. 1. 13, 14, 15

2. Nevertheless, though officers be not absolutely necessary, to the simple being of churches, when they be called: yet ordinarily to their calling they are, and to their well being: and therefore the Lord Jesus out of his tender compassion hath appointed, and ordained officers which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the church; yea, being ascended into heaven, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men, whereof officers for the church are justly accounted no small parts; they being to continue to the end of the world, and for the perfecting of all the Saints.

Rom. 10. 17.
Jer. 3. 15.
1 Cor. 12. 28.
Eph. 4. 11.
Psa. 68. 18.
Eph. 4. 8, 11.
Eph. 4. 12, 13.

3. These Officers were either extraordinary, or ordinary, extraordinary as *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists*: ordinary as *Elders, and Deacons*.

1 Cor. 12. 28.
Eph. 4. 11.
Gal. 1. 11, 8.
6, 26, 19. c.
11. 28.
Rom. 11. 7, 8.

The *Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists*, as they were called extraordinary by Christ, so their Office ended with themselves whence it is, that *Paul* directing *Timothy* how to carry along Church-Administrations, giveth no direction about the choice or course of *Apostles*,

1. Cor. 4. 9.

1 Tim. 3. 1, 2. *Prophets*, or *Evangelist*, but onely of *Elders*, and *Deacons*; and
 v. 8, 10 13. when *Paul* was to take his last leave of the church of *Ephesus* he com-
 Tit. 1. 5. mitted the care of feeding the church to no other, but unto the *Elders*
 Act. 20. 17, of that church; The like charge doth *Peter* commit to *Elders*.
 28. 1 Pet. 5, 1, 23.

4. Of *Elders* (who are also in Scripture called *Bishops*) Some at-
 1 Tim. 3. 2: tend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the *Pastors* and *Teachers*.
 Phil. 1. 1. Others, attend especially unto *Rule*, who are therefore called *Ruling*
 Act. 20. 17, *Elders*.
 28, 1 Tim. 5.

5. The office of *Pastor* and *Teacher*, appears to be distinct :
 17. The *Pastors* special work is, to attend to *exhortation* : and therein to
 Eph. 4. 11. administer a word of *Wisdom* : The *Teacher* is to attend to *Doctrine*,
 Rom. 12. 7, 8. and therein to administer a word of *Knowledge* : and either of them
 1 Cor. 12. 8. to administer the *Seals* of that Covenant; unto the dispensation
 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. whereof they are alike called : as also to execute the *Censures*, being
 Tit. 1. 9. but a kinde of application of the word, the preaching of which, to-
 gether with the application thereof they are alike charged withall.

6. And for as much as both *Pastors* and *Teachers* are given by
 Eph. 4. 11, 12 Christ for the perfecting of the Saints, and edifying of his body,
 c. 1. 22, 23. which Saints, and body of Christ is his church; Therefore we ac-
 count *Pastors* and *Teachers* to be both of them church-officers; and
 1 Sam. 10. 12 not the *Pastor* for the church: and the *Teacher* onely for the *Schools*,
 2. 19, 20. Though this we gladly acknowledg, that *Schools*, are both lawfull,
 2 King 2. 3. profitable, and necessary for the trayning up of such in good *Litera-*
 v. 15. ture, or learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto office of
Pastor or *Teacher* in the church.



CHAP. VII.

Of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

Rom. 12. 7, 8. **T**He *Ruling Elders* Office is distinct from the office of *Pastor*
 9. 1 Tim. 5. 17 and *Teacher*. The *Ruling Elders* are not so called to exclude
 1 Cor. 12. 28. the *Pastors* and *Teachers* from *Ruling*, because *Ruling* and *Governing*
 Heb. 13. 17. is common to these with the other; whereas attending to teach and
 1 Tim. 5. 17. preach the word is peculiar unto the former.

2. The *Ruling Elders* work is to joyn with the *Pastor* and *Teacher*
 in those acts of *spiritual Rule*, which

which are distinct from the ministry of the word & Sacraments committed to them, of which sort, these be, as followeth. *I* To open and shut the doors of Gods house, by the Admission of members approved by the church: by Ordination of officers chosen by the church: and by excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders renounced by the church: and by restoring of penitents, forgiven by the church.

II To call the church together when there is occasion, & seasonably to dismiss them again. *III* To prepare matters in private, that in publick they may be carried an end with less trouble, and more speedy dispatch. *IV* To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled: as, to propound matters to the church, to Order the season of speech and silence; and to pronounce sentence according to the minde of Christ, with the consent of the church. *V* To be Guides & leaders to the church, in all matters whatsoever, pertaining to church administrations & actions. *VI* To see that none in the church live inordinately out of rank and place; without a calling, or idly in their calling. *VII* To prevent & heal such offences in life, or in doctrine; as might corrupt the church. *VIII* To feed the flock of God with a word of admonition. *IX* And as they shall be sent for, to visit, and to pray over their sick brethren. *X* And at other times as opportunity shall serve thereunto.

3. The office of a Deacon is instituted in the church by the Lord Jesus: sometime they are called *Helps*.

The Scripture telleth us, how they should be qualified: Grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre: they must first be proved and then use the office of a Deacon, being found Blameless.

The office and work of the Deacons is to receive the offerings of the church; gifts given to the church, and to keep the treasury of the church: and therewith to serve the Tables which the church is to provide for: as the Lords Table, the table of the ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity.

4. The office therefore being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the church, it extends not unto the attendance upon, and administration of the Spiritual things thereof, as the Word, and Sacraments, or the like.

5. The ordinance of the Apostle, and practice of the church, commands the Lords day as a fit time for the contributions of the Saints.

1 Cor. 12. 28.
Eph. 4. 8, 11.
Acts 20. 28.

6. The Instituting of all these officers in the Church, is the work of God himself; of the Lord Jesus Christ; of the Holy Ghost. And therefore such officers as he hath not appointed, are altogether unlawfull either to be placed in the church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as humane creatures, meer Inventions and appointments of man, to the great dishonour of Christ Jesus, the Lord of his house, the King of his church, whether *Popes, Patriarkes, Cardinals, Arch-Bishops, Lord-Bishops, Arch-Deacons, Officials, Commissaries*, and the like. These and the rest of that *Hierarchy* and *Retinue*, not being plants of the Lords planting, shall all be certainly rooted out, and cast forth.

Matt. 15. 13.

1 Tim. 5. 9.
10.

7. The Lord hath appointed *ancient widows*, (where they may be had) to minister in the church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them, and others, in the like necessities.



CHAP. VIII.

Of the Election of Church-Officers.

Heb. 5. 4.

NO man may take the honour of a Church-Officer unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was *Aaron*.

Galat. 1. 1.

Acts 14. 23.
cap. 6. 3.

2. *Calling* unto office, is either *Immediate*, by Christ himself: such was the call of the Apostles, and Prophets; this manner of calling ended with them, as hath been said: or *Mediate*, by the church.

1 Tim. 5. 22.

cap. 7. 10.

Acts 16. 2.

cap. 6. 3.

3. It is meet, that before any be ordained or chosen officers, they should first be *Tried and proved*; because hands are not suddenly to be laid upon any, and both *Elders and Deacons* must be of honest and good report.

4. The things in respect of which they are to be *Tried*, are those *gifts and virtues* which the Scripture requireth in men, that are to be elected into such places, viz, that *Elders* must be *blameless, sober, apt to teach*, and endued with such other qualifications as are laid down, 1. *Tim.* 3. and 2. *Tit.* 1. 6. to 9. *Deacons* to be fitted, as is directed, *Acts* 6. 3. 1. *Tim.* 3. 8. to 11.

Act. 14. 23.

c. 1. 23. c. 6.

3, 4, 5.

5. Officers are to be called by such Churches, whereunto they are to minister. Of such moment is the preservation of this power: That the churches exercised it in the presence of the Apostles.

Gal. 5. 13.

6. A Church being *free* cannot become *subject* to any, but by a free

free election; Yet when such a people do chuse any to be over them *Hébr. 13.17.* in the Lord, then do they become subject, and most willingly submit to their ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen.

7. And if the church have power to *chuse* their officers and ministers, then in case of manifest unworthiness, and delinquency they have power also to *depose* them. For to open, and shut; to chuse and refuse; to constitute in office, and remove from office; are acts belonging unto the same power. *Rom. 16.17.*

8. Wee judge it much conducing to the wel-being, and communion of churches, that where it may conveniently be done, *neighbour-churches be advised withall*, and their help made use of in the trial of church-officers, in order to their choise. *Cant. 8.8,9.*

9. The *choise* of such Church-officers belongeth not to the civil magistrates, as such, or Diocesan-Bishops, or Patrones: for of these or any such like, the Scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.



CHAP. IX.

Of Ordination, and Imposition of hands.

CChurch-Officers are not onely to be chosen by the Church, but also to be *ordained* by *Imposition of hands*, and prayer. With which at the ordination of Elders, *fasting* also is to be joyned. *Acts 13.3. c.14.23. 1 Tim. 5.22.*

2. This *ordination* we account nothing else, but the solemn putting of a man into his place and office in the Church whereunto he had right before by election, being like the installing of a magistrate in the Common-Wealth. *Numb. 8.10. Acts 6.3,6. cap.13.2,3.*

Ordination therefore is not to go before, but to follow *election*. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the Church, doth not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the Church, and in his accepting of that election. Whereupon is founded the relation between Pastor and flock, between such a minister, and such a people. *Acts. 6.3,6. c.14.23.*

Ordination doth not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office. The Apostles were Elders, without Imposition of hands by men: *Paul* and *Barnabas* were officers, before that Imposition of hands. *Acts. 13.3.* The posterity of *Levi* were Priests, and

Levits, before hands were laid on them by the Children of Israel.

1 Tim. 4. 14. 3. In such Churches where there are Elders, *Imposition* of hands
 Acts 13. 3. in ordination is to be performed by those Elders.

1 Tim. 5. 22. 4. In such Churches where there are no Elders, *Imposition* of
 Numb. 8. 10. hands may be performed by some of the Brethren orderly chosen by
 the church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers which is the
 greater, and wherein the substance of the Office consists, they may
 much more (occasion & need so requiring) impose hands in ordina-
 tion, which is the less, and but the accomplishment of the other.

5. Nevertheless in such Churches where there are no Elders, and
 the Church so desire, we see not why *Imposition* of hands may not be
 performed by the *Elders* of other Churches. Ordinary officers laid
 hands upon the officers of many Churches: The presbytery at *Eph-*
 1 Tim. 4. 14. *esus* laid hands upon *Timothy* an Evangelist. The presbytery at *An-*
 Acts 13. 3. *tioc* laid hands upon *Paul* and *Barnabas*.

1 Pet. 5. 2. 6. *Church Officers*, are officers to one church, even that particular,
 Acts 20. 28. over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. Inasmuch as
 Elders are commanded to feed, not all flocks, but that flock which is
 committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them. Nor
 can constant residence at the congregation, be necessary for a mi-
 nister, no nor yet lawfull, if he be not a minister to one congregation
 Acts 20. 28. onely, but to the church universal: because he may not attend one
 part onely of the church, whereto he is a minister, but he is called to
 attend unto all the flock.

6. He that is clearly loosed from his office-relation unto that
 church whereof he was a minister, cannot be looked at as an officer,
 nor perform any act of *Office* in any other church, unless he be again
 orderly called unto *Office*: which when it shall be, we know nothing
 to hinder, but *Imposition* of hands also in his *Ordination* ought to be
 used towards him again. For so *Paul* the Apostle received *Imposition*
 of hands twice at least, from *Ananias*. Acts. 9. 17. & Acts. 13. 3.



CHAP. X.

Of the Power of the Church, and its Presbytery.

Psal. 2. 6. **S**uprem and Lordly power over all the Churches upon earth, doth
 Eph. 1. 21, 22 onely belong unto *Jesus Christ*, who is the King of the church &
 1 say 9. 6. the head thereof. He hath the Government upon his shoulders, & hath
 Matt. 28. 18. all power given to him, both in heaven & earth.

2. A Company of professed believers *Ecclesiastically Confederat*, as they are a church before they have officers, & without them; so even in that estate, *subordinate Church-power* under Christ deligated to them by him, doth belong to them, in such a manner as is before expressed. C. 5. 52. & as flowing from the very nature & Essence of a church: It being natural to all bodies, & so unto a church body, to be furnished with sufficient power, for its own preservation & subsistace.

3. This *Government* of the church, is a mixt Government (and so hath been acknowledged long before the term of Independency was heard of:) In respect of *Christ*, the head & the King of the church, & the Sovereign power residing in him, & exercised by him, it is a *Monarchy*: In respect of the body, or *Brotherhood* of the church, & power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a *Democracy*: In respect of the *Presbytery* and power committed to them, it is an *Aristocracy*.

4. The *Sovereign power* which is peculiar unto Christ, is exercised. I In calling the church out of the world unto holy fellowship with himself. II In instituting the ordinances of his worship, and appointing his ministers and officers for the dispensing of them. III In giving laws for the ordering of all our ways, and the ways of his house. IV In giving power and life to all his Institutions, and to his people by them. V In protecting and delivering his church against and from all the enemies of their peace.

5. The power granted by Christ unto the body of the church & *Brotherhood*, is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise. I In *Choosing* their own officers, whether Elders, or Deacons. II In *admission* of their own members and therefore, there is great reason they should have power to *Remove* any from their fellowship again. Hence in case of offence any one brother hath power to convince & admonish an offending brother: & in case of not hearing him, to take one or two more to set on the Admonition, & in case of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the church: and as his offence may require the whole church hath power to proceed to the publick Censure of him, whether by *Admonition*, or *Excommunication*: & upon his repentance to restore him again unto his former communion.

6. In case an Elder offend incorrigibly the matter so requiring, as the church had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order (the counsel of other churches where it may be had, directing thereto to remove him from his office: and being now but a

Mat 18. 17. member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other member.

1 Tim. 5. 17. 7. Church-government, or Rule, is placed by Christ in the officers of the church, who are therefore called *Rulers*, while they rule with God: yet in case of mal-administration, they are subject to the power of the church, according as hath been said before. The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioneth Church-Rule, and church-government, ascribeth it to Elders: whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of obeying their Elders; & submitting themselves unto them in the Lord: so as it is manifest, that an organick or compleat church is a body politick, consisting of some that are Governors, & some that are governed, in the Lord.

Acts 20. 28. 8. The power which Christ hath committed to the Elders is to feed and rule the church of God, and accordingly to call the church together upon any weighty occasion, when the members so called, without just cause, may not refuse to come: nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed: nor speak in the church, before they have leave from the Elders: nor continue so doing, when they require silence, nor may they oppose nor contradict the judgment or sentence of the Elders, without sufficient and weighty cause, because such practices are manifestly contrary unto order, and government, and in-lets of disturbance, and tend to confusion.

Rev. 2. 2. 9. It belongs also unto the Elders to examine any officers, or members, before they be received of the church: to receive the accusations brought to the Church, & to prepare them for the churches hearing. In handling of offences and other matters before the Church they have power to declare and publish the Counsel and will of God touching the same, and to pronounce sentence with consent of the Church: Lastly they have power, when they dismiss the people to bless them in the name of the Lord.

Acts 14. 15. 10. This power of Government in the Elders, doth not any wise prejudice the power of priviledg in the brotherhood; as neither, the power of priviledg in the brethren, doth prejudice the power of government in the Elders; but they may sweetly agree together. As wee may see in the example of the Apostles furnished with the greatest church-power, who took in the concurrence and consent of the brethren in church-administrations.

Also that Scripture, *2 Cor. 2.9.* and chap. *10.6.* do declare, that what the churches were to act and do in these matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not onely to the direction of the Apostles, but also of their ordinary Elders. *Hebr. 13.17.*

11. From the premises, namely, that the ordinary power of Government belonging onely to the Elders, power of priviledge remaineth with the brotherhood, (as power of judgment in matters of censure; and power of liberty, in matters of liberty :) It followeth, that in an organick Church, & right administration; all church acts, proceed after the manner of a mixt administration, so as no church act can be consummated, or perfected without the consent of both.



C H A P. XI.

Of the maintenance of Church-Officers.

THe Apostle concludes, that necessary and sufficient maintenance is due unto the ministers of the word: from the law of nature *1 Cor. 9.9. v. 15. Matt. 9.* and nations, from the law of Moses, the equity thereof, as also the rule of common reason. Moreover the Scripture doth not onely call Elders labourers, and workmen, but also speaking of them doth say, that the labourer is worthy of his hire: and requires that he which is taught in the word, should communicate to him, in all good things: *1 Cor. 9.9. v. 11. v. 14.* and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel; and forbiddeth the muzzling of the mouth of the ox, that treadeth out the corn. *1 Tim. 5. 18.*

2. The Scriptures alledged requiring this maintenance as a bounden duty, and *due debt*, and not as a matter of almes, and free gift therefore people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they please in this matter, no more than in any other commanded duty, & ordinance of the Lord: but ought of duty, to minister of their *Carnal things* to them, that labour amongst them in the word and doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other workmen their wages, or to discharge and satisfie their other debts, or to submit themselves to observe any other ordinance of the Lord. *Rom. 15. 27. 1 Cor. 9. 11.*

3. The Apostle, *Gal. 6. 6.* injoyning that he which is taught communicate to him that teacheth *in all good things*: doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man shall give, or in what proportion,

1 Cor. 16. 2. portion, but even the later, as well as the former, is prescribed and appointed by the Lord.

4. Not onely members of Churches, but *all that are taught in the word*, are to contribute unto him that teacheth, in all good things. Galat. 6. 6. In case that Congregations are defective in their contributions, the Deacons are to call upon them to do their duty: if their call sufficeth not, the church by her power is to require it of their members, and where church-power through the corruption of mem, doth not, or cannot attain the end, the Magistrate is to see ministry be duely provided for, as appears from the commended example of *Nehemiah*. Neh. 13. 11. The Magistrates are nursing fathers, and nursing mothers, and stand charged with the custody of both Tables; because it is better to prevent a scandal, that it may not come, and easier also, than to remove it when it is given. Its most suitable to Rule, that by the churches care, each man should know his proportion according to Rule, what he should do, before he do it, that so his judgment and heart may be satisfied in what he doth, and just offence prevented in what is done. 2 Cor. 8. 13. 14.



CHAP. XII.

Of Admission of members into the Church.

2 Chron. 23. 19. Mat. 13. 25. & 22. 12. The doors of the Churches of Christ upon earth, do not by Gods appointment stand so wide open, that all sorts of people good or bad, may freely enter therein at their pleasure; but such as are admitted thereto, as members ought to be *examined* and *tryed* first; whether they be fit and meet to be received into church-society, or not. Acts. 8. 37. The Eunuch of *Aethiopia*, before his admission was examined by Philip, whether he did believe on Jesus Christ with all his heart; the Angel of the church at *Ephesus* is commended, for trying such as said they were Apostles and were not. There is like reason for trying of them that profess themselves to be believers.

Rev. 21. 12. 2 Chr. 23. 19. The officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the Church, and therefore are in a special manner to make tryall of the fitness of such who enter. Twelve Angels are set at the gates of the Temple, lest such as were Ceremonially *unclean* should enter therinto.

Acts. 2. 38. to 41. & 8. 37. 2. The things which are requisite to be found in all church members, are, *Repentance* from sin, and *faith* in Jesus Christ.

And

And therefore these are the things whereof men are to be examined, at their admission into the Church, and which then they must profess and hold forth in such sort, as may satisfie *rational charitie*, that the things are there indeed, *John* Baptist admitted men to Baptism, confessing and bewayling their sins: and of other it is said, that they came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. *Matth. 3. 6. Acts 19. 8.*

3. The weakest *measure* of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church: because weak Christians if *sincere*, have the *substance* of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in Church-members: and such have most need of the Ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed, *Matth. 12. 20. Isai 40. 11.* but gather the tender lambs in their arms, and carry them gently in his bosome. Such *charity* and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest Christian if sincere, may not be excluded, nor discouraged. Severitie of examination is to be avoided.

4. In case any through excessive fear, or other infirmity, *be unable* to make their personal *relation* of their spiritual estate in publick, it is sufficient that the Elders having received private satisfaction, make *relation* thereof in publick before the Church, they testifying their assents thereunto; this being the way that tendeth most to edification. But whereas persons are of better *abilities*, there it is most expedient, that they make their *relations, and confessions* personally with *Psal. 66. 16. 18.* their own mouth, as *David* professeth of himself.

5. A personal and publick *confession*, and declaring of Gods manner of working upon the soul, is both lawfull, expedient, and usefull, in sundry respects, and upon sundry grounds. Those three thousands, *Acts 2. 37. 41.* Before they were admitted by the Apostles, did manifest that they were pricked in their hearts at *Peters* Sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins, which now wounded their consciences, and their ready receiving of the word of promise and exhortation. We are to be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us, to every one that asketh us: therefore *1 Pet. 3. 15.* we must be able and ready upon any occasion to declare and shew our *repentance for sin, faith unfeigned, and effectual calling*, because *Heb. 11. 1.* these are the reasons of a well grounded hope. I have not hidden thy righteousness from the great congregation, *Psal. 40. 10.*

6. This profession of faith and repentance, as it must be made by such at their *admission*, that were never in Church-society before: so

Matt. 3. 5, 6.

Galat. 2. 4.

1 Tim. 5. 24.

1 Cor. 8. 8.

Matth. 7. 6.

1 Cor. 11. 27.

nothing hindreth, but the same way also be performed by such as have formerly been members of some other church, and the church to which they now joyn themselves as members, may lawfully require the same. Those three thousand, *Acts. 2.* which made their confession, were members of the church of the Jews before, so were they that were baptised by *John*. Churches may err in their admission: and persons regularly admitted may fall into offence. Otherwise, if Churches might obtrude their members, or if church-members might obtrude themselves upon other churches, without due tryall, the matter so requiring, both the libertie of churches would hereby be infringed, in that they might not examine those, concerning whose fitness for communion, they were unsatisfied: and besides the infringing of their libertie, the churches themselves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the Ordinances defiled, whilst they might not refuse, but must receive the unworthy: which is contrary unto the Scripture, teaching that all churches are sisters, and therefore equal.

7. The like tryal is to be required from such members of the church, as were born in the same, or received their membership, and were baptised in their infancy, or minoritie, by virtue of the covenant of their parents, when being grown up unto years of discretion they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lords Supper: unto which, because holy things must not be given unto the unworthie, therefore it is requisite, that these as well as others, should come to their tryal and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof, before they are received to the Lords Supper, and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto.

Yet these Church-members that were so born, or received in their child-hood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full communion, have many priviledges which others (not church-members) have not: they are in covenant with God; have the seal thereof upon them, *viz.* Baptism; and so if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopefull way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and seal; they are also under Church-watch and consequently subject, to the reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need shall require.

C H A P. XIII.

Of Church-members their removal from one Church to another, and of Letters of recommendation, and dismissal.

Church-members may not remove or depart from the Church, and so one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause, but ought to live and dwell together: for as much as they are commanded, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruine of the body: as the pulling of stones, and pieces of timber from the building, and of members from the natural body, tend to the destruction of the whole. Heb. 10. 25.

2. It is therefore the duty of Church-members, in such times and places when counsel may be had, to consult with the Church where of they are members, about their removal, that accordingly they having their approbation, may be encouraged or otherwise desist. They who are joyned with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto. Prov. 11. 16.

3. If a members departure be manifestly unsafe, and sinfull, the Church may not consent thereunto: for in so doing, they should not act in faith: and should partake with him in his sin. If the case be doubtfull and the person not to be perswaded, it seemeth best to leave the matter unto God, and not forcibly to detain him. Rom. 14. 13.
1 Tim. 5. 22.
Acts 21. 14.

4. Just reason for a members removal of himself from the Church are 1. If a man cannot continue without partaking in sin: 11. In case of personal persecution, so Paul departed from the Disciples at Damascus. Also, in case of general persecution, when all are scattered. 111. In case of real, and not onely pretended, want of compotent subsistence, a door being opened for better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification. In these, or like cases, a member may lawfully remove, and the Church cannot lawfully detain them. Ephes. 5. 11.
Acts 9. 25.
and vers. 29,
30. chap. 8. 1.
Neh. 13. 10.

5. To separate from a Church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements with just grief to the Church; or out of Schism, or want of love; and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, or some evil onely conceived; or indeed, in the Church which might and should be tolerated 2 Tim. 4. 10.
Rom. 16. 17.
Jude 19.

20
Eph. 4. 2.
Col. 3. 13.
Gal. 6. 1, 2.

Of the Removal of Church-members.

and healed with a spirit of meekness, and of which evil the Church is not yet convinced, (though perhaps, himself be) nor admonished : for these or like reasons to withdraw from publick communion in word, or seals, or censures, is unlawfull and sinfull.

Isai 56. 8.
Acts 9. 26.

6. Such members as have orderly removed their habitation ought to joyn themselves unto the Church in order where they do inhabit if it may be : otherwise, they can neither perform the duties, nor receive the priviledges of members; such an example tolerated in some, is apt to corrupt others; which if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of Churches contrary to the Scripture.

2 Cor. 14. 33

Acts 18. 27.

7. Order requires that a member thus removing, have letters *testimonial*, and of *dismissal* from the Church whereof he yet is, unto the Church whereunto he desireth to be joyned, lest the Church should be deluded; that the Church may receive him in faith; and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers, and false brethren. Untill the person dismissed be received into another Church, he *ceaseth not* by his letters of dismissal to be a member of the Church whereof he was. The Church cannot make a member, no member but by excommunication.

Rom. 16. 1, 2.
2 Cor. 3. 1.

8. If a member be called to remove *only for a time*, where a Church is letters of *Recommendation* are requisite, and sufficient for communion with that Church, in the ordinance, and in their watch: as *Phæbe*, a servant of the Church at *Cenchrea*, had letters written for her to the Church of *Rome*, that she might be received, as becommeth Saints.

Acts 18. 27.
Col. 4. 10.
Rom. 16. 1.

9. Such letters of *Recommendation* and *dismissal* were written for *Apollos*: for *Marcus* to the *Colossions*; for *Phæbe* to the *Romans*; for sundry others to other Churches, and the Apostle telleth us, that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such letters, though he for his part had no need thereof. The use of them is to be a benefit, and help to the party for whom they are written; & for the furthering of his receiving amongst the Saints in the place whereto he goeth; and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

2 Cor. 3. 1.

C H A P. XIV.

Of Excommunication and other Censures.

1 Tim. 5. 20.
Deut. 17. 12,
13.

THe *Censures* of the Church are appointed by Christ, for the preventing, removing, and healing of offences in the Church :
for

for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren : for the deterring of others from the like offences: for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump : for vindicating the honour of Christ, and of his Church, and the holy profession of the Gospel: and for preventing of the wrath of God, that may justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

2. If an offence be *private* (one brother offending another, the offender is to go, and acknowledge his repentance for it unto his offended brother, who is then to forgive him, but if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the brother offended is to go, & convince, and admonish him of it, between themselves privately : if thereupon the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher hath won his brother, but if the offender hear not his brother, the brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established, (whether the word of admonition if the offender receive it, or the word of complaint, if he refuse it :) for if he refuse it, the offended brother is by the mouth of the Elders to tell the Church, and if he hear the Church, and declare the same by penitent confession, he is recovered and gained, and if the Church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case if hereby ; They are to dispencc to him a publick admonition ; which declaring the offender to ly under the publick offence of the Church, doth thereby with-hold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lords Supper, till his offence be removed by penitent confession. If he still continue obstinate they are to cast him out by Excommunication.

3. But if the offence be more *publick* at first, and of a more *heynous* and *criminal nature*, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature, than the Church without such gradual proceeding, is to cast out the offender, from their holy communion, for the further mortifying of his sin and the healing of his soul, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4. In dealing with an offender, great care is to be taken, that we be neither over-strict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss : our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted ; and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the wining and healing of the offenders soul, being the end of these endeavours we must not daub with untempered mortar, nor heal the wounds of our brethren

threaten ~~slightly~~, on some have compassion others save with fear.

Mat. 18. 17.

1 Cor. 5. 11.

2 Thes. 3. 6.

14.

5. While the offender remains excommunicate, the Church is to *refrain from all member-like communion* with him in spiritual things, and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, farther than the necessity of natural, or domestical, or civil relations do require: and are therefore to forbear to eat & drink with him, that he may be *ashamed*.

1 Cor. 14. 24.

25.

2 Thes. 3. 14.

6. Excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the excommunication, nor deprive him of his *civil rights*, and therefore toucheth not Princes, or other Magistrates, in point of their civil dignity or authority. And, the excommunicate being but as a publican and a heathen, heathens being lawfully permitted to come to hear the word in Church assemblies; we acknowledge therefore the like liberty of hearing the word, may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto heathens. And because we are not without hope of recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy but to admonish him as a brother.

2 Cor. 2. 7.

8.

7. If the Lord sanctifie the censures to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ, he doth testify his repentance, with humble confession of his sin & judging of himself, giving glory unto God; the Church is then to *forgive* him, and to *comfort* him, and to *restore* him to the wonted brotherly communion, which formerly he enjoyed with them.

Rev. 2. 14.

15. Vers. 20.

Mat. 23. 3.

Acts 3. 1.

8. The suffering of profane or scandalous Livers to continue in fellowship, and partake in the Sacrament, is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hand, to redress it; and do it not. Nevertheless, in as much as Christ & his Apostles in their times, and the Prophets and other godly in theirs, did lawfully partake of the Lords commanded Ordinances in the Jewish Church, and neither taught nor practised *separation* from the same, though unworthy ones were permitted therein; and in as much as the faithful in the Church of *Corinth*, wherein were many unworthy persons, and practises, are never commanded to absent themselves from the Sacraments, because of the same: therefore the godly in like cases, *are not presently to separate*.

2 Cor. 6.

chap. 15. 12.

9. As *separation* from such a Church wherein profane and scandalous Livers are tolerated, is not presently necessary: so for the members thereof, otherwise worthy, hereupon to *abstain* from communicating with such a Church in the participation of the Sacraments, is unlawfull. For as it were unreasonable for an innocent person to be punished, for the faults of other wherein he hath no hand, and whereunto he gave no consent; so is it more unreasonable, that a godly man

2 Chron. 30.

18.

Gen. 18. 25.

man should neglect duty, and punish himself in not coming for his portion in the blessing of the seals, as he ought, because others are suffered to come, that ought not. Especially, considering that himself doth neither consent to their sin, nor to their approaching to the Ordinances in their sin, nor to the neglect of others who should put them away, and do not: but on the contrary doth heartily mourn for these things, modestly and seasonably stir up others to do their duty. If the Church *cannot be reformed*, they may use their liberty, as is specified, chap. 13. Sect: 4. But this all the godly are bound unto, even every one to do his endeavour, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duly proceeded against by the Church to whom this matter doth appertain. Ezek. 9. 10.

C H A P. X V.

Of the communion of Churches one with another.

Although Churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another: and equal, and therefore have not dominion one over another: yet all the Churches ought to preserve *Church-communion* one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not onely as a mystical, but as a political head; whence is derived a *communion* suitable thereunto. Rev. 1. 4.
Cant. 8. 8.
Rom. 16. 16.
1 Cor. 16. 19.
Acts 15. 23.
Rev. 2. 1.

2. The *communion* of Churches is exercised sundrie ways.

1. By way of mutual *care* in taking thought for one anothers welfare. Cant. 8. 8.

1 1. By way of *Consultation* one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgement and counsel of other Churches, touching any person, or cause wherewith they may be better acquainted than our selves. As the Church of *Antioch* consulted with the Apostles, and Elders of the Church at *Jerusalem*, about the question of Circumcision of the Gentiles, and about the false Teachers that broached that doctrine. In which case, when any Church wanteth light or peace amongst themselves, it is a way of communion of Churches (according to the word) to meet together by their Elders and other messengers in a Synod; to consider and argue the points in doubt, or difference, and having found out the way of truth and peace, to commend the same by their Letters and messengers to the Churches, whom the same may concern. But if a Church be Acts 15. 2.
Acts 15. 6.
Vers. 22. 23.

rent

Exh. 34.4.

rent with division amongst themselves, or lye under any open scandal, and yet refuse to consult with other Churches, for healing or removing of the same; it is a matter of just offence both to the Lord Jesus, and to other Churches, as bewraying too much want of mercy and faithfulness, nor to seek to binde up the breaches and wounds of the Church and brethren; and therefore the state of such a Church calleth aloud upon other Churches, to exercise a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of *admonition*.

Gal. 2. 11.
10. 14.Mat. 18. 15,
16, 17. by
proportion.

Gen. 18. 25.

I I I. A third way then of communion of Churches is by way of *admonition*, to wit, in case any publick offence be found in a Church, which they either discern not, or are slow in proceeding to use the means for the removing and healing of. *Paul* had no authority over *Peter*, yet when he saw *Peter* not walking with a right foot, he publicly rebuked him before the Church: though Churches have no more authority one over another, than one Apostle had over another; yet as one Apostle might admonish another, so may one Church admonish another, and yet without usurpation. In which case, if the Church that lyeth under offence, do not hearken to the Church which doth admonish her, the Churches to acquaint other neighbour-churches with that offence, which the offending Church still lyeth under, together with their neglect of the brotherly admonition given unto them; whereupon those other Churches are to joyn in seconding the admonition formerly given: and if still the offending Church continue in obstinacy and impenitency, they may forbear communion with them; and are to proceed to make use of the help of a Synod, or counsel of neighbour-churches walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the Synod, the Synod having declared them to be obstinate, particular Churches approving and accepting of the judgment of the Synod, are to declare the sentence of non-communion respectively concerning them: and thereupon out of a religious care to keep their own communion pure, they may justly withdraw themselves from participation with them at the Lords Table, and from such other Acts of holy communion, as the communion of Churches doth otherwise allow and require. Nevertheless, if any members of such a Church as lyeth under publick offence; do not consent to the offence of the Church, but do in due sort bear witness against it, they are still to be received to wonted communion: for it is not equal, that the innocent should suffer with the offensive.

Yea

Yea furthermore, if such innocent members after due waiting in the use of all good means for the healing of the offence of their own Church, shall at last (with the allowance of the counsel of neighbour-churches) withdraw from the fellowship of their own Church and offer themselves to the fellowship of another; we judge it lawfull for the other Church to receive them being otherwise fit) as if they had been orderly dismissed to them from their own Church.

I V. A fourth way of communion of Churches, is by way of *participation*: the members of one Church occasionally coming unto another, we willingly admit them to *partake* with us at the Lords Table, it being the seal of our communion not onely with Christ, nor onely with the members of our own Church, but also with all the Churches of the Saints: in which regard, we refuse not to baptize their Children presented to us, if either their own Minister be absent, or such a fruit of holy fellowship be desired with us. In like case such Churches as are furnished with more Ministers than one, do willingly afford one of their own Ministers to supply the place of an absent or sick Minister of another Church for a needfull season.

V. A fifth way of Church-communion is by way of *recommendation*, when a member of one Church hath occasion to reside in another church; if but for a season, we commend him to their watchfull fellowship by Letters of Recommendation: but if he be called to settle his abode there, we commit him according to his desire, to the fellowship of their covenant, by Letters of Dismission.

VI. A sixth way of Church-communion is in case of *need*, to minister *relief* and *succour* one unto another: either of able members to furnish them with Officers: or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches; as did the churches of the Gentiles contribute liberally to the poor Saints at *Jerusalem*.

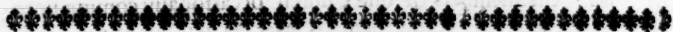
3. When a company of believers purpose to gather into church-fellowship, it is requisite for their safer proceeding, and the maintaining of the communion of churches, that they signify their intent unto the neighbour-churches, walking according unto the order of the Gospel, and desire their presence, and help, and right-hand of fellowship which they ought readily to give unto them, when there is no just cause of excepting against their proceedings.

4. Besides these several ways of communion, there is also a way of propagation of churches; when a church shall grow too numerous,

Isay 40.20.
Cant. 8.8,9.

rous, it is a way, and fit season, to propagate one Church out of another, by sending forth such of their members as are willing to remove, and to procure some Officers to them, as may enter with them into church-estate amongst themselves: as Bees, when the Hive is too full, issue forth by swarms, and are gathered into other Hives, so the churches of Christ may do the same upon like necessity; and therein hold forth to the right hand of fellowship, both in their gathering into a church; and in the Ordination of their Officers.

*them



CHAP. XVI.

Of Synods.

Acts 15.2,
10,15.

SYNods orderly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the patern, *Acts* 15, we acknowledg as the Ordinance of Christ: and though not absolutely necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, and perverseness of times, necessary to the well-being of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein.

Acts 15.2,3.
vers. 6.
vers. 7,10,11.
vers. 31.
Acts 16.
4.15.

2. Synods being spiritual and ecclesiastical Assemblies, are therefore made up of spiritual and ecclesiastical causes. The next efficient cause of them under Christ, is the power of the churches, sending forth their Elders, other messengers, who being met together in the name of Christ, are the matter of the Synod; and they in arguing, debating, and determining matters of Religion according to the Word, and publishing the same to the churches whom it concerneth, do put forth the proper and formal acts of a Synod; to the conviction of errors and heresies, and the establishment of truth and peace in the churches, which is the end of a Synod.

2 *Chron.* 29.
4,5,10,11.
Acts 15.

3. Magistrates have power to call a Synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their Elders and other messengers, to counsel and assist them in matters of Religion: but yet the constituting of a Synod, is a church act, and may be transacted by the churches, even when civil Magistrates may be enemies to churches and to church-assemblies.

Acts 15.
1,2,6,7.
1 *Chron.*
15.13.

4. It belongeth unto Synods and Councils, to debate and determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience: to clear from the Word holy directions for the holy worship of God, and good government of the church; to bear witness against mal-administra-

tion

tion and corruption in doctrine or manners in any particular church, and to give directions for the reformation thereof: not to exercise church-censures in way of discipline, nor any other act of church-authority or jurisdiction: which that presedential Synod did forbear.

2 Chron. 29.
6, 7.
Acts 15. 24.
v. 28, 29.

5. The Synods directions and determinations, so far as consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not onely for their agreement therewith which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they binde not at all: but also secondarily, for the power whereby they are made, as being an Ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word.

Acts 15.

6. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, for many churches to come all together in one place, in all their members univerally: therefore they may assemble by their Delegates or messengers, as the church of *Antioch* went not all to *Jerusalem*, but some select men for that purpose. Because none are or should be more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of ways for the good thereof than Elders: therefore it is fit that in the choice of the messengers for such Assemblies, they have special respect unto such: yet in as much as not onely *Paul* and *Barnabas*, but certain others also were sent to *Jerusalem* from *Antioch*, *Acts* 15. and when they were come to *Jerusalem*, not onely the Apostles and Elders, but other Brethren also do assemble, and meet about the matter; therefore Synods are to consist both of Elders, and other church-members, endued with gifts, and sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches.

Acts 15. 2.

Acts 15. 2.
v. 22, 23.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the Civil Magistrates power in matters Ecclesiastical.

IT is lawfull, profitable, and necessary for Christians to gather themselves into Church-estate, and therein to exercise all the Ordinances of Christ according unto the Word, although the consent of the Magistrate could not be had thereunto; because the Apostles and Christians in their time did frequently thus practise, when the Magistrates being all of the Jewish or Pagan, and mostly persecuting enemies, would give no countenance or consent to such matters.

Acts 2.
41, 42.
cap. 4. 1, 2, 3.

2. Church-government stands in no opposition to civil government of Common-wealths, nor any intrencheth upon the authority

John 8. 36.

John 18. 26
Acts 25. 8

ty of civil Magistrates in their jurisdictions; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing; but rather strengthneth them, and furthereth the people in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience unto them, whatsoever some ill affected persons to the ways of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affections of Kings and Princes from the Ordinances of Christ; as if the Kingdom of Christ in his Church could not rise and stand, without the falling and weakning of their government, which is also of Christ: whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpfull unto the other, in their distinct and due administrations:

Isa 45. 23

Rom. 13. 4
1 Tim. 2. 2

3. The power and authority of Magistrates is not for the restraining of Churches, or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof; and therefore the consent and countenance of Magistrates when it may be had, is not to be sleighted, or lightly esteemed; but on the contrary; it is part of that honour due to christian Magistrates to desire and crave their consent and approbation therein: which being obtained, the Churches may then proceed in their way with much more encouragement and comfort.

Ezek. 44. 7, 9

1 Cor. 5. 11

4. It is not in the power of Magistrates to compell their subjects to become church-members, and to partake at the Lords Table: for the Priests are reprov'd, that brought unworthy ones into the Sanctuary: then, as it was unlawfull for the Priests, so it is as unlawfull to be done by civil Magistrates. Those whom the Church is to cast out if they were in, the Magistrate ought not to thrust into the church nor to hold them therein.

Mat. 20.
25, 26

2 Chron. 26.
16, 17.

5. As it is unlawfull for Church-Officers to meddle with the Sword of the Magistrate, so is it unlawfull for the Magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church-Officers: the Acts of *Moses* and *David*, who were not onely princes, but Prophets, were extraordinary; therefore not imitable. Against such usurpation the Lord witnessed, by smiting *Uzziah* with leprosie, for presuming to offer incense.

Psal. 82. 2

1 Tim. 2. 1, 2

6. It is the duty of the Magistrate, to take care of matters of religion, and to improve his civil Authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as for observing of the duties commanded in the second Table. They are called Gods. The end of the Magistrates Office, is not onely the quiet and peaceable life

of the subject, in matters of righteousness and honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea of all godliness. *Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Aza, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah*, are much commended by the Holy Ghost, for the putting forth their Authority in matters of Religion: on the contrary, such Kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed and reproved by the Lord. And not onely the Kings of *Judah*, but also *Job, Nehemiah*, the King of *Nineveh, Darius, Artaxerxes, Nebuchadnezzar*, whom none looked at as Types of Christ, (though were it so, there were no place for any just Objection,) are commended in the Book of God, for exercising their Authority this way.

7. The object of the power of the Magistrate, are not things meerly inward, and so not subject to his cognisance and view, as unbelief, hardness of heart, erroneous opinions not vented; but onely such things as are acted by the outward man; neither is their power to be exercised, in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing the neglect thereof, as are but meer inventions and devices of men; but about such acts, as are commanded and forbidden in the word; yea such as the word doth clearly determine, though not always clearly to the judgment of the Magistrate or others, yet clearly in it self. In these he of right ought to put forth his Authority, though oft-times actually he doth it not.

8. Idolatry, Blasphemy, Heresie, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions, that destroy the foundation, open contempt of the word preached, prophanation of the Lords day, disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, and the like, are to be restrained, and punished by civil Authority.

9. If any Church, one or more shall grow schismatical, rending it self from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the word; in such case the Magistrate is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require. The Tribes on this side *Jordan* intended to make war against the other Tribes, for building the Altar of witness, whom they suspected to have turned away therein from following of the Lord.

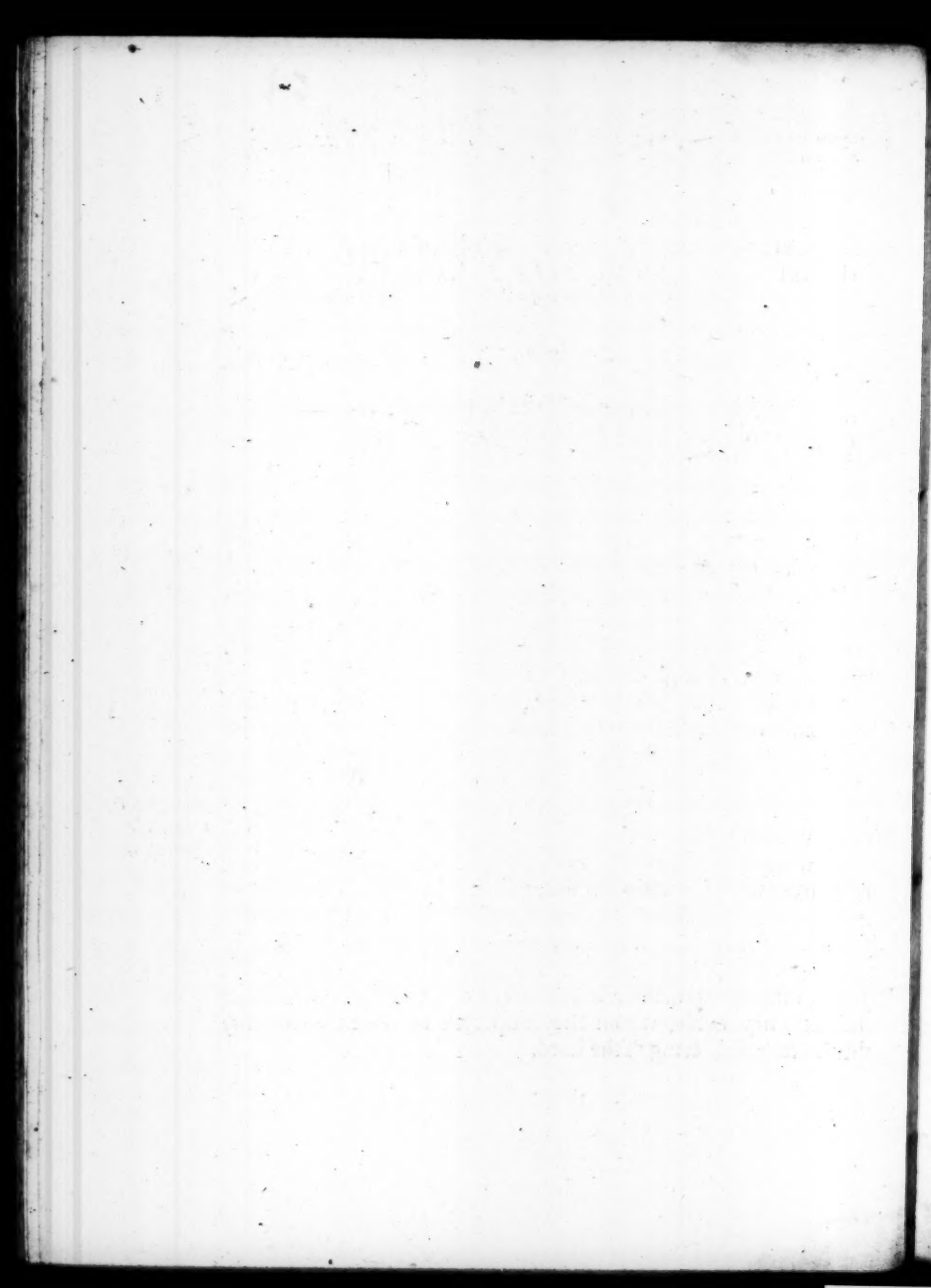
F I N I S.

1 King. 15. 14
C. 22. 43
2 King. 12. 3
C. 14. 4 C. 15
35. 1 King.
20. 42. Job.
29. 25. C. 31.
25. 28. Ne. 13
Jonah 3. 7
Ezra 7.
Dan. 3. 29

1 King. 20. 28
vers 40.

Deut. 13
1 King 20. 18
vers 42.
Dan. 3 29
Zach. 13. 3
Neb. 13. 21
1 Tim. 2. 2
Rom. 13. 4

Joshua 2 2.





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